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Weekly Summary

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CHILE

Following Secretary Simon's recent "Id., the military regime freed 49 political prisoners and gave every indication of finally being serious about improving its performance in the human rights field, an area in which it had been subjected to strong international criticism ever since it came to power. The government announced that a number of military and security personnel had been brought to trial on charges of mistreating prisoners and took other steps to correct abuses. President Pinochet announced last Wednesday that 50 additional detainees would be released soon.

Last week, however, the government arrested about 50 persons, including the four highest ranking members of the Communist Party, citing the possibility of leftist-inspired violence. Although there have been no major terrorist incidents since tough state-of-siege measures were imposed following the coup in September 1973, security forces claim to have information on plans for political assassinations and sabotage intended to embarrass the Pinochet government.

Security forces have been placed on alert, and police patrols are being reinforced throughout the country in advance of the OAS General Assembly session scheduled to begin on June 4. Guards are being posted around embassies in Santiago to prevent any staged rush for political asylum by agitators attempting to give substance to their charges of repression. Prominent prisoners are being put under tight security wraps for fear leftists may attempt to assassinate them and place the blame on the junta.

Among other moves likely to give the government's critics new ammunition, intelligence agents last week arrested a lawyer who has worked with the Catholic Church on human rights cases and who recently met with a visiting U.S. congressional delegation. The international press is almost certain to play up the meeting with the US delegation as the possible motivation for the arrest, whatever the actual facts of the case are.

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*Cardinal Silva*

Chile's Cardinal Silva [REDACTED] is prepared to make a strong public protest over the incident. A bitter church-state confrontation on human rights at this time would only undermine the military regime's efforts to improve its image. [REDACTED]

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